# NewsRelease

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**NASA SPONSORS ROBOTICS COMPETITION**

Hampton, Norfolk and Virginia Beach, Va., students will join thousands of high school students from around the world to design and build an original robot in the 2004 FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition.

Sponsored by NASA's Langley Research Center and Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Engineering, the fifth annual regional robotics competition will be held on March 4-6 at the Siegel Center in Richmond, Va. Over 60 teams will compete for honors and recognition that reward design excellence, competitive play, sportsmanship and high-impact partnerships between schools, businesses and communities.

**Media Opportunity:**
News media are invited to attend the competition. The competition will also be broadcast via the Internet on Thurs., March 4 through Sat., March 6 at **http://robots.larc.nasa.gov**. Interviews and b-roll of the competition will also be available. Interested media should call Kimberly W. Land, 757-864-9885 or 757-344-8611/cell phone.

NASA Langley is again working closely with a team from the New Horizons Regional Education Center in Hampton, Va. NASA and New Horizons have formed a partnership enabling students to work along side current and retired NASA engineers and technicians as well as a top engineer from private industry.

Joanne Talmage, electronics teacher at New Horizons, is one of the coaches for this year's team. "This is the best hands-on project that allows students from multiple school systems to learn to work with one another and form a cohesive team," says Talmage. "The kids learn about gear ratios, strategizing and design concepts while interacting with some of NASA's finest engineers and others from various industries in the area."

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In this year's challenge, "FIRST Frenzy: Raising the Bar," students design their robots to race around a playing field collecting and passing 13-inch balls to human players who then shoot the balls into fixed and moveable goals. Additionally, robots may attempt to hang from a 10-foot bar.

Each year, FIRST develops the robotics competition by supplying a "problem" and a kit of parts to teams of students. Each team has just six weeks to organize, design, build, program and test its robot for competition.

Once these young inventors create the robot, their teams participate in regional competitions that measure the effectiveness of each robot, the power of collaboration and partnerships, and the spirit and determination of students.

This year's FIRST Robotics Competition anticipates its largest season ever with 935 teams, including 220 rookie teams, representing Brazil, Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom, and nearly every state in the U.S. The 2004 FIRST season is made up of 26 regional competitions, held in the U.S. and Canada, in March and April. More than 600 students will compete to earn a spot at the Championship held April 15-17 at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Ga.

FIRST is a non-profit organization, established in 1989 by Dean Kamen, an entrepreneur and inventor with over 100 patents. FIRST's mission is to stimulate student interest in math and science. In 1992, FIRST began organizing a national robotics competition. The goal of the program is to join high school students with professional engineers and technicians from industry and academia to design, construct and operate the robots. The event has become known as the "super-bowl" of engineering and the "the ultimate mind sport."

For more information about FIRST Robotics, visit:

**http://usfirst.org**

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